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ACTION HA-75

INFO OCT-21 ABA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC EPRICITY 5356
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY L. M. G. S. DATE 5/5

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

1. 11652: 16DS-2
TAGS: PINS, PCOV, SRUM, UV
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS - MEETING OF PRESIDENT MENDEZ WITH
HISPANIC BUSINESS LEADERS
REF: (A) MONTEVIDEO 5471 (B) MONTEVIDEO 5399
BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL
1. NOVEMBER 25, PRESIDENT MENDEZ RECEIVED THREE
VISITING HISPANIC BUSINESS LEADERS FOR A TWO-HOUR-
PLUS CONVERSATION HEAVILY FOCUSED ON HUMAN RIGHTS-
RELATED ISSUES. THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF THE CONVER-
SATION IS BASED ON NOTES TAKEN DURING THE MEETING
BY CHAIRMAN BENJAMIN FERNANDEZ AND EX-AMBASSADOR
PHILIP SANCHEZ.
2. PRESIDENT MENDEZ READILY CONCEDED THAT THE GOV
HAS A "NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE" ON HUMAN
RIGHTS, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO "A PUBLIC RELATIONS
VOID" AND A LACK OF RESOURCES TO DEFEND THE GOVERN-
MENT'S ACTION. HE STATED THAT THE GOV WAS AT LEAST
PARTIALLY TO BLAME FOR THIS IMAGE AND MUST ADOPT

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A POLICY OF "GREATER OPENNESS AND CANDOR" TO CONVINCE
THE WORLD OF THE "IMPROVING SITUATION" HERE. AS
PART OF THIS POLICY, HE INDICATED THAT HE HOPED TO
MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO RESPOND TO ANY HUMAN RIGHTS-RELATED
INQUIRY FROM THE URUGUAYAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON
(OR ELSEWHERE) IN 48 HOURS, AND TO BE SIMILARLY
RESPONSIVE TO INQUIRIES FROM FOREIGN EMBASSIES
IN MONTEVIDEO.

3. WHEN THE VISITORS ASKED ABOUT THE NUMBER OF
PERSONS DETAINED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY REASONS,
REQUESTED A LIST OF THESE PRISONERS, AND ASKED TO
VISIT A PRISON, THE PRESIDENT AGAIN ENDEAVORED
TO BE RESPONSIVE. HE AGREED THAT A VISIT (WITH THE
GROUP'S PHOTOGRAPHER) TO LA LIBERTAD, WHERE THE BULK
OF THE POLITICAL DETAINEES ARE HELD, WOULD BE USEFUL
AND PROMISED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS (WHICH HE DID).
HE INDICATED THAT THE NUMBERS COULD NOT ADEQUATELY
BE PROVIDED BY THE AUTHORITIES AT THE PRISON WHICH

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THEY WIFE, FOR THAT FACILITY ONLY), AND THAT THE VISITORS SHOULD BE GIVEN A LIST OF ALL "PERSONS DETAINED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY REASONS". THE PRESIDENT SUGGESTED THAT THE GROUP CONTACT THE SUPREME MILITARY TRIBUNAL TO OBTAIN SUCH A LIST. (HOWEVER, THEY WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN CONTACTING THE TRIBUNAL DURING THEIR MONTEVIDEO STAY.)

4. THE PRESIDENT THEN COMMENTED THAT, IN AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE GOV'S HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE, HE HOPED TO ANNOUNCE AN AMNESTY FOR 200-400 PRISONERS BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO ORDER THE RELEASE OF OTHERS UNDER HIS PRESENTLY-ACQUIRED PARDON AUTHORITY. (REF. A). HE INDICATED THAT, IN ADDITION,

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"A LARGE NUMBER" OF PRISONERS WOULD BE GRANTED CON-
DITIONAL LIBERTY BY MEANS OF OTHER LEGAL PROVISIONS PRIOR TO MID-MARCH 1978.

5. SOMEWHAT COUNTERBALANCING THE POSITIVE IMPRESSION MADE BY THE STATEMENTS ABOVE, THE PRESIDENT WELLS AT LEAST TWO OF THE VICES OF (1) THE GOV'S CONTINUING ACTIONS TO DEFEND NATIONAL SECURITY;
(2) GOV'S HATRED WITH ENEMY; AGAINST THE SOPELIGATED AND UNLAWFUL ENEMY; AND, (3) RESISTING
ENEMY'S INSTIGATIONS SO THAT THE "ENEMY" COULD NEVER BEAT. (REF. A). (REF. A). (REF. A).